

## Everett Community Streets Initiative Task Force

### Draft Task Force Report

*Draft dated 10.27.14*

#### **Executive Summary** (1-2 pages -- to be drafted after Meeting 8)

- Mission
- Members
- Process
- Problem Statement summarized
- Summary of priority recommendations
- Next steps expectations

#### **Report** (15-17 pages, plus attachments)

*(Note: this draft does not yet include recommended priority action items; there are a small number of other issues to be discussed by the Task Force, and some data points still being confirmed.)*

#### **Introduction** (2 pages)

- **Task Force Mission**

This Task Force was convened by Everett Mayor Ray Stephanson in late July, 2014, and charged to ***“foster a vibrant and healthy community . . . [by] better understand[ing] the street-level social issues in Everett’s commercial core areas and identify[ing] potential short- and long-term actions for the community to address those issues.”*** We chose to augment this mission in one respect: to ensure we also consider citywide impacts, including impacts of our recommendations on residential neighborhoods.

As a Task Force, we share the Mayor’s vision that Everett become a vibrant and health community. A hallmark of this vision, in our view, is that our community cares about all its citizens and that we act, individually and collectively, to address the needs of all residents.

- **Task Force Membership**

We are a citizen group, and our role is advisory. Each of us was selected to serve on the Task Force by Mayor Stephanson. Our 23 members reflect a wide diversity of interests in Everett—business leaders from real estate, retail, restaurant, medicine, and law; residents; and leaders of the major nonprofit service agencies in the City serving those with mental health and addiction problems and the homeless. Each of us was allowed to appoint an alternate to serve in our absence.

Our work was supported by a team of government staff leaders, who sat at the table with us and participated actively in our deliberations but were not voting members of the Task Force. This team brought an important depth of experience to our deliberations, and included the County Sheriff, County Director of Human Services, City Police Chief, Assistant City Fire Chief, Deputy City Attorney, City

Economic Development Director, Neighborhoods and Community Services Executive Administrator, and the Director of the Everett Housing Authority.

A full list of our members and the support team is included at **Attachment A**.

- **Our Process**

The Task Force met nine times, for three hours each meeting. All our meetings were open to the public and were well attended, some by nearly 100 residents. We typically had 30 -50 people observe each meeting. We provided comment forms to get input from all attendees, and offered an ability to submit comments online. All comments submitted were transcribed and provided to us for our consideration. In addition, we conducted a public hearing on September 9, at which we heard testimony from 10 individuals. All our materials, including all the public comments, meeting summaries and presentations, and videos of all meetings were posted online on the City's website.

To begin our deliberations, we adopted a charter to guide our decision making process. We spent most of our first five meetings learning about the street level social issues in Everett. We began by learning about Everett's street populations—who they are, what challenges they face. The County Department of Human Services provided extensive data related to these questions and identified gaps in the existing data.

We heard from Police Chief Templeman and Sheriff Trenary about the crime issues in the City and the challenges at the County Jail. We heard from representatives of the criminal justice system—a Municipal Court judge, City prosecutor and public defender. We heard from government and nonprofit service providers and business and property owners in Everett. We heard from agencies that provide temporary and crisis housing in the City and from agencies providing permanent housing. At our sixth meeting, representatives from Tacoma and Seattle discussed best practices and staff provided materials about selected programs around the Country.

A series of site visits were arranged for us, so that we could get a better understanding of the issues. We were able to visit local nonprofits, including a local mental health facility, a drug treatment program, a church feeding program, and the Snohomish County Jail. We also had the opportunity to meet with a panel of local downtown business owners to hear their concerns. A list of the site visits is presented at **Attachment B**.

We wanted to ensure that we heard the perspectives of homeless individuals. For this purpose, the Everett Gospel Mission conducted a focus group with approximately 40 men who are currently homeless. Three Task Force members attended this focus group and the Task Force was provided a transcript of the discussion (presented at **Attachment C**). Among the major "take-aways" from this focus group are:

- Virtually all the individuals said they would go into housing immediately if they could. They are not on the street by choice.
- There are a variety of barriers to getting into housing: lack of available units, lack of rental history or sufficient income, drug or alcohol use, or having a criminal record.
- Many expressed a desire to be able to access services to help them improve their situation—from health care, treatment and counseling, to job training.
- Many mentioned the desire to be able to have a job and contribute to the community.

- These individuals reject the stereotypes applied to them. They expressed concern about drugs and violence on the streets-- concern about their own safety, and theft of their few belongings.

After completing these informational meetings, a long list of potential recommendations was developed based on suggestions offered in our first six meetings. In addition, each Task Force Member was given the opportunity to suggest potential recommendations. We also formed three subcommittees, including Task Force members, staff, and others in the community, to bring back focused recommendations in three key areas:

- Criminal Justice
- Outreach and Emergency Services
- Permanent Housing and Wrap-Around Services

After some work to consolidate similar ideas, we ended up with 93 different items to consider. We used ballots to vote on each of these items and express our level of support for each. Per our charter, items supported by at least 80% of Task Force members voting were considered to be **“consensus” items**; items supported by at least 60% but less than 80% were considered to be **“recommended” items**. We discussed the results of the voting at our 7<sup>th</sup> meeting and made a number of adjustments. Using this process, we identified **36 consensus items** and **27 recommended items**. An additional 30 items did not receive sufficient support to be included as recommendations. Our consensus and recommended items are presented here in the form of **16 strategies**, each with a number of supporting **priority action items**—short term and long-term. The recommendations and priorities are discussed below. At our last two meetings, we reviewed and provided input into the drafting of this report, prepared by our independent facilitator.

## **The Challenge [problem statement] (2-3 pages)**

The street-level social issues that the City of Everett is experiencing are common to other urban centers throughout the State and the nation. In Everett, these issues are most visible in our highly compact City center. The situation is exacerbated by the fact that Everett is the County seat: downtown Everett is home to the County Jail and most of the major human services providers for the entire County.

### ***The Task Force identified the following street-level social issues and conditions to be of greatest concern:***

- Street conduct and behaviors: aggressive panhandling, loitering, vandalism, public intoxication, urination and defecation, drug dealing; bizarre, unpredictable, disoriented or disturbing conduct and speech; and sleeping, lying and sitting on the streets.
- Physical conditions on the streets: litter, including alcoholic beverage containers and hypodermic needles; personal belongings stored or abandoned on sidewalks, in alleys and on other public and private property.
- Criminal conduct (in addition to the above): shoplifting, car prowls, theft and miscellaneous other crimes.
- Visible street homelessness.
- Mental illness and addiction problems suffered by many on the streets.

These issues are in large part—but not entirely – a symptom of homelessness, mental illness, addiction, and poverty.

*Task Force members and other community stakeholders and members of the public expressed the following **concerns arising from or related to these street-level social issues**:*

- The quality of life, attractiveness of the area, and vitality of business activity in the City's commercial core areas are adversely affected
- Public safety in commercial core areas is perceived by many to be diminished.
- Concern that visible street homelessness in the commercial core areas make those areas less attractive to visitors.
- Concern for the well-being of individuals on our streets experiencing the mental illness, addiction, poverty, homelessness and crime.

*The Task Force identified a number of **constraints and obstacles to addressing these issues and concerns**:*

*Institutional challenges:*

- Lack of an overall vision and focus on bringing together our currently fragmented criminal justice and human services systems to better address these issues.
- Lack of communication and coordination among social service providers, government agencies, businesses and residents
- Insufficient funding and service capacity to provide the addiction and mental health treatment and other services required to successfully address these issues.
- Insufficient supply of low-income permanent housing to meet the needs of the City's population.
- Insufficient police staffing to provide an increased presence in commercial core areas.
- Traditional criminal justice and law enforcement responses, while appropriate for many, are often ineffective, inappropriate, and too expensive to deal with street level social issues -- but effective alternatives to the traditional system are being deployed in limited ways in Everett.
- Governmental restrictions often make it difficult to site housing and services, which drives up the costs of these facilities.
- Possible misallocation of resources – too great a focus on “band aid” solutions, not enough on root causes of street-level social issues.

*Community conditions:*

- Lack of permanent affordable housing in the City, coupled with a high percentage of the City's residents being “housing burdened” (paying over 30% of their income for housing).
- Community fears about the siting of services and housing facilities in their proximity.
- Lack of job and career pathway development for low income and homeless individuals
- Unintended negative impacts on neighborhoods and businesses caused by services intended to respond to street level social issues.
- Lack of public understanding of some of underlying causes and complexity of the issues.
- Those in need lack the information about where to get help, and may lack the capacity to help themselves.

**We believe that implementation of our recommendations can and will significantly improve these problems.**

## Task Force Recommendations

### Part 1: General Observations & Policy Recommendations

We are fortunate in this community to have many excellent service providers in the nonprofit and government sectors, who daily tackle the street level social issues in Everett. Street level social issues are extremely complex and many different government and non-profit agencies and service providers engage different segments of the population at different times. These many agencies and providers are often “siloeed” in their activities, which can lead to fragmented service delivery and unintended consequences. We believe **a strong systems approach is needed to effectively address street level social issues in Everett**. Efforts must be coordinated. Agencies must evaluate actions by identifying and addressing cross-system impacts and coordinating between criminal justice, human services, housing and service provider systems/communities.

Moreover, we believe this system analysis and engagement must occur not just within Everett, but on a county-wide basis. **(12), (73)(R), 75(R)**<sup>1</sup>. Everett should not be the single locus of activity to address what are in fact countywide challenges.

### Part 2: Recommendations

We present our recommendations below by category. The Task Force identified six categories of challenge and developed recommendations within each:

Category 1: Improving Public Safety and Reducing Crime

Category 2: Providing More and Enhanced Services to Street Populations

Category 3: Providing More Housing and Shelter

Category 4: Improving Public Understanding

Category 5: Improving Inter-Agency Coordination and Communication

Category 6: Advocacy

Within each category, our recommendations are grouped by specific **strategies** with **supporting tactics/actions** identified for each strategy.

As noted, we tiered our recommendations into two levels: **consensus items** receiving support of at least 80% of the Task Force Members voting, and **recommendation items**, receiving support of at least 60% (but less than 80%) of Task Force members voting. In total, we identified 38 consensus items and 29 recommended items. An additional 26 items did not receive sufficient support to be included in the

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<sup>1</sup> Numbers correspond to ballot items. The ballot is reproduced at **Attachment D**. Items with the reference “**(R)**” received support of least 60% but less than 80% of Task Force members voting (“**recommended**” items); all other items are “**consensus**” items, receiving support from **at least 80%** of the Task Force members voting. Note that some items are presented in this report in different categories than they appear on the ballot, in an effort to logically organize the many recommendations into a manageable set of strategies.

report. The full list of items considered, and voting results as adjusted by Task Force deliberations, are presented at **Attachment D**.

Each item has been initially assessed by the City staff team as to its *cost* and whether it can be accomplished in the *short term* (1-2 years) or will take *longer* to accomplish (2-5 years). Staff also identified the *required parties* to participate in each item, as well as other *recommended partners*. This information is included at **Attachment D**.

Our **priority recommendations are identified with an asterisk (\*)**. **[TBD—Meeting 8]**

- **Short term priorities** are items that we think can and should be implemented in the next year or two that will show immediate, visible results for the community. Note that many of these will require sustained effort beyond the initial implementation phase.
- **Longer-term priorities** are items that we think will make the biggest difference in the long term, and that we hope to see significant progress on in the next two to five years.

### **Category 1: Improving Public Safety and Reducing Crime**

The Task Force recommends a mix of traditional and alternative strategies to improve public safety and reduce crime in the City's commercial core areas.

**The challenge:** The cost to the City of the traditional arrest-prosecute-incarcerate response is increasing dramatically. There are a small number of individuals in the City cycling through the system again and again at tremendous public cost. There is strong evidence that alternatives to traditional policing practices are more effective at reducing overall public costs and helping move people safely off the streets.

**Policy goals:** Criminal Justice practices should be evidence-based and cost effective to reduce recidivism and should not simply shift costs from one entity to another but should result in cost savings for the community as a whole. **(5)** Law enforcement and criminal justice entities should be transparent and accountable. Their practices should be driven, measured and tracked with meaningful data to show the community how they are affecting crime, recidivism, and street level social issues; data should be available to the public and practices should be modified periodically in response to the data. **(13)(R)**

*We identify four strategies in this category:*

#### **Strategy 1.1: Expanded use of effective traditional policing practices.**

*Supporting tactics/actions endorsed by the Task Force include:*

- **Alcohol Impact Area(s)** – designate area(s) within the City in which the sale of high alcohol content, inexpensive single-serving take out products is prohibited. **(3)**
- **Amend the aggressive begging ordinance to prohibit panhandling at intersections and on median strips** without changing the associated penalty for these offenses. **(10)**

- **Encourage City police officers to reside in Everett. (8)** This will help build communities ties between the police force and the community it serves.
- **Increase law enforcement presence in the commercial core areas**, especially bike and foot patrols. Use non-commissioned personnel if there are insufficient commissioned officers to implement this recommendation.(16)(R)

**Strategy 1.2: Expand efforts to divert non-violent homeless individuals and others suffering from mental illness and substance abuse problems to more effective, less expensive alternatives to detention.**

*Supporting tactics/actions endorsed by the Task Force include:*

- **Expand use of therapeutic courts:** expand the City's existing Community Justice Alternatives program to include a drug court, and explore the feasibility of a homeless court and community court.(2)
- **Implement a work crew** as an alternative sentencing option in lieu of incarceration. The Crew would focus on cleaning up (sweeping, litter pickup, etc.) commercial core areas most affected by litter, beer cans, graffiti and other by-products of street disorder. (7)
- **Incorporate outreach to street populations into police and EMS services:** provide police and EMS personnel with training/information on available services to which to refer homeless individuals. Embed a social worker in EMS and police teams. This recommendation is based on a best practices model in Santa Monica, California, that the Everett Police Department has investigated and believes would be successful in Everett. (11)
- **Implement a collaborative, systemic review of the criminal justice system. (14)(R)** The various partners in the Criminal Justice system –jails, courts, police, prosecutors, public defenders, EMS -- must be routinely and actively communicating with one another on ways to improve the effectiveness of the system. The City should provide leadership to ensure this communication occurs.
- **Develop a multi-agency team to respond to frequent utilizers** (identified in consultation with business and property owners) of emergency, police, jail and medical resources with individually tailored plans to improve functioning of such individuals and reduce the burden on these systems. (15)(R)

**Strategy 1.3: Take steps to ensure individuals leaving the County Jail are less likely to become homeless.**

*Supporting Tactics/actions endorsed by the Task Force include:*

- **Jail Transition Services Facility:** Support the County's current proposal to convert the Carnegie Building, which is adjacent to the Jail, into a jail transition facility with services, caseworkers and temporary shelter for individuals released from Jail so they are not released onto the streets without resources. **(6)** The Carnegie Building has been vacant for several years, its interior stripped down; the County has secured a majority of the funding necessary for this project but a portion of the capital budget remains unfunded.
- **Adjust jail release time** from midnight to a reasonable hour when complimentary services are open. **(4)**
- **Ensure released inmates and other dislocated individuals are returned to their place of origin or where relational support is present.** **(9)**

**Strategy 1.4: Provide skills and outreach services to businesses and residents in the commercial core areas to help reduce crime, more quickly identify emerging problems and ensure prompt response when problems arise.**

*Supporting tactics/actions endorsed by the Task Force include:*

- Broader engagement of the business community in the **Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design** (CPTED) program currently offered by Everett Police. **(1)**
- **Implement a Business Outreach Support program**, similar to Tacoma's Business Outreach Support Specialist (BOSS) where a city staff person (not in the Police Department) is charged with working directly with local businesses impacted by unwelcome activities on or near their businesses, including support after hours and on weekends. **(33)**

**Category 2: Providing More and Enhanced Services to Street Populations**

**The challenge:** There are insufficient services to meet the needs of the City's street populations. Outreach services, and a place to offer these services, are the necessary foundation for engaging homeless individuals and helping them to make the choice to get off the street and into needed treatment. Without access to day centers, homeless people have no option but to remain on the streets during the day. These facilities are also critical connection points for getting individuals access to treatment services and housing. Several such centers are currently operating in the City: Compass Health, Everett Gospel Mission, and Cocoon House. Additionally, the Recovery Café Project is scheduled



to come on line later this year, subject to meeting funding needs. **[Note: Recovery Café project? (44) at 58% support not at “Recommended” level]**

Nationally, data shows that half of the adult homeless population were homeless as youth. The homeless youth count in the City spiked last year. Homeless youth are a population that in our view warrants more attention.

Many people who are homeless suffer from alcohol addiction and substance abuse problems. Snohomish County’s population has *tripled* since the first and only medical detox facility was opened in 1985—operated by Evergreen Manor in the City, with a total of 16 beds. Additionally, the triage bed facility in the City—used in lieu of more expensive (or unavailable) jail beds – is often at capacity. And, there are currently no medical detox beds available for youth in Snohomish County.

Homeless individuals also often suffer from mental illness. There is inadequate service capacity to meet the needs of these individuals—a challenge exacerbated by the State Supreme Court’s recent decision to require elimination of “boarding” of mentally ill individuals in hospitals and jails.

Church feeding programs provide vital services to homeless and non-homeless individuals and families, but neighboring businesses and residents have raised concerns about the external impacts of these efforts.

**Policy goals:** The Task Force recommends several strategies to build on existing services and programs in the City with the goal of making more effective use of these. Overall, additional funding for outreach and services is required to improve the situation. The Task Force endorses prioritizing support for services for children under 18, then for young adults (18-24), and then older populations. **(23)** We also recommend prioritizing support for programs that help people demonstrating a willingness to help themselves and go to treatment. **(34) (R)** **[Note: Conflict with housing first?]** And, we note the importance of ensuring services are accessible via public transportation. **(37)**

*We identify six strategies in this category:*

**Strategy 2.1: Increase capacity of, and access to, drop-in day centers in the City.**

*Supporting tactics/actions endorsed by the Task Force include:*

- Expand the hours of existing drop in centers. **(20)**
- Explore the need/feasibility of establishing additional centers. **(20)**
- Where possible, expand services and amenities available at day centers (e.g., showers, laundry). **(20)**
- Careful consideration must be given to minimizing impacts on commercial core areas and neighborhoods. One specific tactic of this nature: Request accommodation by the Health Department to allow Compass Health clients to smoke in a less visible location than the sidewalk and lawn on Broadway, one of the City’s gateway arterials. Help other facility operators as appropriate secure similar accommodations. **(54)(R)**

**Strategy 2.2: Expand availability of basic service facilities available for homeless individuals in commercial core areas of the City.**

*Supporting tactics/actions endorsed by the Task Force include:*

- Establish a **unified call-center and a one-stop service center** for chronically homeless individuals. Ideally, the service center would be located near the Everett Transit Center to take advantage of its extensive transportation resources. Services would include, for example, medical and dental care and assistance applying for Medicaid, SSI and other benefits. **(21)**
- **Multiple small outreach sites for information on available services** should be installed around the City. **(22)**
- Have **mailboxes** available for homeless to help them get jobs and provide outreach for these services at feeding programs. **(26)**
- Explore options for **expanded public restroom access** to reduce negative impacts from street populations on the Everett Public Library, Transit Center and commercial core areas. Map existing public restrooms where street populations are welcome and provide signage downtown to direct people to these facilities. Explore the feasibility of urban rest stops and public restroom solutions. **(287)**
- **Offer safe storage facilities** for homeless people to leave their belongings. **(56)(R)**

**Strategy 2.3: Expand county-wide capacity to effectively serve the specialized treatment needs of homeless populations.**

*Supporting tactics/actions endorsed by the Task Force include:*

- Fund and establish additional **triage bed capacity**. **(29)**
- Fund and establish additional **mental health care treatment capacity** to serve homeless populations. **(25)**
- Fund and establish **medical detox treatment beds for youth**. **(29)**
- Support construction of the proposed **South County detox facility**. **(29)**
- Change City funding policy to allow programs providing alcohol and drug treatment services to apply for City Human Needs Funding dollars. **(42)(R)**

Siting of treatment facilities must be sensitive to minimizing impacts on commercial core areas and neighborhoods.

**Strategy 2.4: Expand outreach services to both homeless youth and adults.**

*Supporting tactics/actions recommended by the Task Force include:*

- **Expand funding for youth and adult outreach services** to ensure pro-active, ongoing outreach to street populations. This includes our recommendation above to embed social workers with police and EMS staff. **(24)**
- Funding should support active outreach at **target sites** including meal programs, the library, transit center, day centers and other identified spots where street level social issues arise. **(24)**
- **Increase resources for outreach training, and coordinate training between systems** (first responders, volunteers from faith-based communities, homeless service providers) on Mental Health First Aid and First Aid, volunteer safety, and outreach best practices. Ensure these individuals know what community resources are available so they can better support street populations and refer individuals to appropriate and available supportive services. **(30)**
- **Expand outreach to individuals living in homeless encampments.** We endorse a model such as that deployed by Tacoma and urge a re-direction of existing PATH (Projects for Assistance in Transition from Homelessness) resources for this effort, which should identify, clean-up and monitor homeless encampments, and connect displaced individuals with housing, treatment and other services. **(38) (R)**

**Strategy 2.5: Take steps to keep people from becoming homeless in the first place.**

*Supporting tactics/ actions endorsed by the Task Force include:*

- **Support job training programs (26).**
- **Transport dislocated and/or stranded individuals:** identify people who have been dislocated to Everett (including those released from jail and emergency rooms), and return them to their families or other location where they have a support system. **(28)**
- **Establish a flexible fund** for meeting one-time, short-term needs of precariously housed individuals, including emergency rent and utility payments, to prevent homelessness and reduce the need for more costly interventions. **(35) (R)**

**Strategy 2.6: Ensure the City’s multiple faith-based feeding programs operate with best practices and engage them in helping to reduce potential negative impacts on neighboring businesses/residents.**

*Supporting tactics/ actions endorsed by the Task Force include:*

- **Implement best practices at meal programs.** These include providing indoor waiting and serving areas, monitored restroom facilities and pro-active clean-up of neighboring areas, and engaging individuals served in the operation of the meal program where possible. Faith based communities should be convened twice a year for best practices training. Those offering meal programs should coordinate times and locations to best serve needs throughout the community. **(36) (R)**
- Explore ways to **consolidate locations of church feeding programs**, allowing them to continue their faith-based mission but at fewer locations. **(40)(R)**
- **Increase communication** between churches offering feeding programs and neighboring businesses **(68)(R)**

**Category 3: Providing More Housing and Shelter**

***The Challenge:*** Many of the street level social issues in the City are driven by the presence of a homeless population in the core commercial areas. And, at the most basic level, people will remain homeless if there is no housing for them to go to.

There is inadequate temporary shelter capacity in the City: the largest shelter, the Everett Gospel Mission, in addition to filling all its shelter beds has dozens of men sleeping on the floor each night, and turns away hundreds of people each month. There are a total of 209 emergency shelter beds in the City for adults; only 8 for unaccompanied youth. There are *no beds available* for youth with criminal records. The 2014 Point in Time Homeless Count for the County identified 83 unaccompanied homeless youth. Nationally, estimates are that half of homeless adults were homeless as youth.

To provide some context, the table below summarizes the “Point in Time”(PIT) Counts for chronically homeless individuals and unaccompanied youth *in Everett*, per the last four annual “PIT Counts.” Note that it is generally agreed that PIT counts *understate* the number of homeless individuals, and *homeless individuals are only one aspect of the street level social issue challenges in the City*; some of the challenges observed are not attributable to the homeless, but to other individuals.

Everett Point in Time Homeless Count Data <sup>2</sup>				
Year	2011	2012	2013	2014
Unaccompanied Youth	25	22	18	33
Chronic homeless Adults	132	118	114	119

*Source: Snohomish County*

There is also a lack of *permanent housing* for individuals who have an array of health challenges—mental illness, alcohol abuse, substance abuse. There are 40 permanent housing units for persons with mental illness provided in downtown Everett by the Compass Center. There is a waiting list to access these units. There are total of 603 permanent supportive housing units available to individuals in Everett. The Everett Housing Authority has a waiting list of 5650 households seeking a variety of housing.<sup>3</sup>

Everett also has a large number of residents that are housing burdened: over half the City’s residents pay more than 30% of their gross income for rent. There is a thin line between being housed and being homeless: we were told that having as little as \$1,800 is the average reserve required to weather job or health issues and remain housed. Attention must be paid to ensure the situation does not get worse. The City’s Comprehensive Plan identifies the need for an additional [redacted] affordable housing units to be constructed by 20 [redacted] in order to meet the needs of the growing population.

Recommendations in this category are the most expensive and long-term to implement, but are foundational to solving the problems of street level social issues. The challenge is large, but not insurmountable. The “Point in Time” counts of chronic homeless individuals, unaccompanied youth and veterans *combined* have totaled between [redacted] and [redacted] between 2011 and 2014 in Everett. Point in Time counts are generally agreed to underestimate the numbers of homeless. But progress can be made: The City of Tacoma, through a combined effort of expanded outreach and use of the “Housing First” model has reduced its downtown chronic homeless population by 60% since 2005.

*The Task Force identifies two strategies in this category:*

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<sup>2</sup> **Unaccompanied youth** are 17 and under, homeless, and not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian. The numbers of unaccompanied youth include those counted on the streets, and those that were in Everett youth shelters and transitional housing programs on the night of the counts. A **Chronic homeless adult** is defined as an individual who has experienced homelessness for a year or longer, or who has experienced at least four episodes of homelessness in the last three years and has a disability. The chronic homeless numbers include those counted on the streets, and those that were in Everett shelters (mainly, the Everett Gospel Men’s Mission) on the night of the counts. *In addition* to the unaccompanied youth and chronic homeless adults, the PIT Counts found in Everett many of **homeless families**: 105 in 2011; 126 in 2012, 102 in 2013 and 97 in 2014. The focus of the Task Force is on the unaccompanied youth and homeless adults found in the commercial core areas of the City.

<sup>3</sup> The Everett Housing Authority notes this household count includes some duplication, as households sign up on multiple lists.

### **Strategy 3.1: Increase supply of permanent supported subsidized housing. (52)**

*Supporting tactics/actions endorsed by the Task Force include:*

- **Expand use of “Housing First” Model** to provide “low barrier” housing for chronically homeless individuals, after which they can begin to get treatment. Given that new housing is expensive to develop under traditional approaches, **explore efforts to develop low cost and non-traditional housing options** – with attached services –such as shared housing, shipping container housing, and subsidized micro-housing. Consider both scattered site and small community developments. **(51)**
- Replicate the successful **housing levy** model implemented in Seattle and Bellingham (either an Everett levy or a countywide levy) to orchestrate a coordinated set of housing projects to address community priorities. **(81)**
- Develop **more “SRO” (single room occupancy) housing** under public or nonprofit management. **(53)(R)**
- Create county and city **tax incentives for creation of affordable SRO housing**. **(57)(R)**
- **Preserve affordable units** in the City that are at risk of being redeveloped, through purchase of these units by the Everett Housing Authority or other agencies. **(58)(R)**
- *(See also related advocacy strategies in Category 6, Advocacy, supporting an increase in Everett’s allocations from the State Housing Trust Fund.)*

### **Strategy 3.2: Build more shelter bed capacity to serve a range of populations in need. (50)**

*Supporting tactics/actions endorsed by the Task Force include:*

- Snohomish County should **increase funding for facilities serving the mentally ill and chronically homeless**, such as the Compass Health and the Everett Gospel Mission. Consideration should be given to new or relocated facility sites. **(47)**
- Develop shelter capacity to serve youth and adults with criminal records that make them otherwise ineligible for any existing shelter/housing programs. **(55)(R)**

## **Category 4: Improving Public Understanding**

**The challenge:** Progress in addressing street level social issues requires better public understanding of the issues. All members of the Task Force learned a great deal over the course of this effort, and many of us have as a result modified our views as to what are the most effective and appropriate responses to street level social issues. It is important to promote public understanding and support around these issues, if the recommendations in this report are to be successfully implemented.

*There is one general recommended strategy in this category:*

**Strategy 4.1: Enhance public understanding of the complexity of street level social issues and work to build a more inclusive and welcoming community.**

*Supporting tactics/actions endorsed by the Task Force include:*

- Identify **liaisons from the business and service provider communities** who can work together and with individual businesses and providers to enhance understanding, identify and resolve problems to work with service provider (and vice versa) **(66)**
- Institute a **“Hospitality Program”** designed to facilitate a citywide philosophy of responsiveness and support to business owners, shoppers, visitors, street people, service providers, and faith communities. The program staff would get to know all street people and their situations, facilitate referrals and connections, and facilitate ways in which residents and businesspeople can be helpful in their interactions with street people, help problem-solve challenging situations, and help faith communities find ways to deploy street ministry activities.**(67) (R)**

**Category 5: Improving Inter-Agency Coordination & Communication**

**The Challenge:** As noted in the introduction to the recommendations section, the Task Force supports a systems approach to solving the complex problems of the City’s street level social issues. This requires better coordination between existing service providers. Lack of coordination limits our ability to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of service delivery to street populations.

*There is one overarching strategy recommended in this category:*

**Strategy 5.1: Develop Better Systems and Information to Most Effectively Deploy Limited Resources.**

*Supporting tactics/actions endorsed by the Task Force include:*

- Involve currently/previously homeless individuals in further analysis of impacts of chronic homelessness and potential initiatives to improve the situation, and take other steps to gather more and better information about this population—their needs and abilities. **(32)**
- Map resources available in Everett for people experiencing homelessness and others in need (time of day, type, location) so service providers, governments, and the community have a clearer picture of what is going on, where. This can also be used to help get information to those in need. **(70)**
- Increase coordination between those providing outreach services. **(71)**
- Develop a centralized intake system (software/database) that service providers can use to match individuals with available services from multiple providers across the community. **(41)(R)**

- Encourage additional funding for good collaboration. **(73)(R)**
- Invite business and community members of the Task Force to join the Board of the Snohomish County Partnership to End Homelessness. **(75)(R)**

### **Category 6: Advocacy**

**The challenge:** Local nonprofit service providers face serious competition now for access to local (county and city) funds. As a community, the City and County must step up with additional funds to support the recommendations we have identified above. But we must also seek additional resources from others—specifically, the federal and state government and private funders. Advocacy is a critical component of our success. In some instances, we can join with other counties and cities; in some instances, we will be directly competing with them for limited state, federal and private funding.

*We endorse two strategies in this category:*

**Strategy 6.1: The City, County, service providers, and business community should join forces to advocate for additional state, federal and private funding resources to help address the City's street level social issues.**

- There should be work across the board to support increased funding of mental health treatment and drug and alcohol treatment through advocacy at the federal, state, and local government levels and with private funders. **(82)**
- The City, County and partners should together advocate for an increase in funding in the State Housing Trust Fund to support specific housing projects addressing street level social issues in Everett. **(83)**
- The City, County and partners should advocate to secure more state funding for the PATH program in Snohomish County. These resources are extremely effective in outreach to homeless populations. **(84)**

**Strategy 6.2: Broaden the Discussion to Include all Cities and Other Key Agencies in Snohomish County.**

- Everett and Snohomish County must work with other cities and public agencies throughout the County to encourage them to address issues of homelessness in their own communities so there is less pressure on Everett's resources. **(72)** A systems approach is important to avoid duplication of effort and unintended consequences. **(74)**

Other advocacy items supported by the Task Force include:

- Support campaigns to give money to service providers, rather than cash to panhandlers. **(80)**



- Advocate for more flexible funding, so agencies can apply it where/as needed and spend less time reporting back to the state/federal governments. **(85) (R)**
- Support changes in the mental health system to increase secure treatment capacity for individuals who are a danger to themselves or others. **(39)(R)**

## Conclusion – Implementation and Next Steps

- **Implementation**

We are pleased that the Mayor has appointed David Hall, Deputy City Attorney, and lead City staff for the Task Force, to take on responsibility for overseeing implementation of our recommendations. We understand his first task will be to convene a small team of government, non-profit and community leaders to develop an implementation framework and report back to us on that by the end of March 2015.

We acknowledge that while the City is a necessary partner to implementing many of our recommendations, most recommendations in this report will also require the engagement of parties other than the City. This is a challenge affecting our entire community, and our entire community must be engaged in the response.

We note that it will be important to identify **metrics to measure success** of these efforts. We ask that the implementation team take up this up as part of its first phase of work. Our ability to attract needed resources and community support to sustain efforts on recommended actions will depend on the ability to show results.

- **Next Steps**

To promote accountability in delivering upon our recommendations, **we have asked to be reconvened [TBD: at least twice a year for the next two years?] to hear about progress on implementation.** We understand that not everything we have recommended can be launched immediately, and that using a systems analysis approach, choices will need to be made about how to best deploy scarce resources. We look forward to reviewing the proposed implementation framework in March as a first step.

- **Appreciation**

We thank the Mayor for his leadership in convening this Task Force and for the opportunity to provide our recommendations to him, to the City Council, and the greater Everett community. We extend our particular thanks to the staff team from the City, County and Housing Authority for their tremendous work, advice and input throughout this effort.

**Proposed List of Attachments:**

- A. Task Force Membership (including City/County/EHA support team)
- B. List of Field Trips/ Site Visits in which Task Force Members participated
- C. Transcript of Focus Group with Homeless Individuals
- D. Final revised ballot (including cost estimates, implementation term, required partners, recommended partners, and votes)